

Town of Newport
Regular Meeting of the Mayor and Commissioners
April 15, 2021, 7:00 pm

Mayor Walker opened the meeting advising that compliance with the Delaware Open Meeting act was indicated at the reorganization meeting.

Town Manager's Report – Continued work on the town's Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP) with New Castle County, reconciliation of the CARES Act grant that the town received and used to purchase AV equipment in the Old Town Hall and building improvements at the municipal building, been in contact with the state treasurer's office regarding the American Rescue Plan funds the town will be receiving, gun mount annual report.

Police Chief's Report – March, 2021, department data. Mayor Walker asked about the one stop sign violation noted and wondered how that could be based on what was happening daily with cars running signs. He indicated that East and West Ayre, and North and South Mary were the most violated. Asking for one person assigned to the area. He also wants the truck signs changed at Market and Walnut. There was discussion on how the current signs dictated enforcement. no one is paying attention to the signs, clarification on where the actual violation takes place and local deliveries. Vice Mayor Gretz said that the issues on Market to Walnut to Ayre to James were not the only concern and that there was no enforcement of those trucks. Chief Wohner will follow up.

Donna Valiante, 21 N. Walnut Street, suggested signage in relation to the Amazon warehouse being built. Mayor Walker indicated that those tractor trailers would not be traveling through town and that 141 and 95 would be utilized. Ms. Valiante said that she had some property damage on her sidewalk due to a big rig coming through and with Amazon coming, signage could be useful.

Alderman's Report - \$41,047 court collections for March, 2021. Mayor Walker asked about the large accounts receivable balance. There is no collection mechanism for past due payments and the DMV is not suspending licenses.

Maintenance Report – Bob Harvey, Maintenance Supervisor, reported that signs were being replaced, grass cutting has begun, and the street sweeper needed some repair due to some rusting underneath. Vice Mayor Gretz asked if it was the sweeper just purchased from New Castle City and why there was rust and it most likely occurred by previously being left out. Commissioner MacDonald wanted to ask about posting signs to notify of street sweeping since most people on her street do not have a driveway so many cars are not moved to really get the streets clean. Mayor Walker suggested having the 2nd maintenance man blowing behind the sweeper to assist in that.

Code Enforcement – Former Code Enforcement Officer Walker advised that everything is pretty much the same. Cars are stopping in the middle of the street, garages on W. Ayre Street showing residences no respect because of the parking situation. There are designated Residential only and Business only parking, though not enforced and would like to brainstorm and see some residential parking established.

Solicitor's Report – Working on two different litigations.

Mayor Walker discussed the implication of not having law on our side when it comes to code enforcement. We should consider requiring all commercial properties obtain a license. Vice Mayor Gretz asked about residential properties and Mayor Walker said that he wants maintenance to obtain complete rental list and those that don't get a rental license, a letter will go out, but having a process in place that allows the town to address non-compliance. He would like to know if there are deed restrictions on municipal building and Old Town Hall. There should also be cameras for the Old Town Hall due to the new equipment. He advised that he and several commissioners developed a list of questions/problems/issues/items that need to be changed and will be having conversations with the town manager to address those items. Commissioner MacDonald asked who were the people involved with the

development of the list. Mayor Walker advised that he and other commissioners who were candidates at the time and proceeded to explain some troubling issues such as tinted windows of the police cars and fear from residents as a result, descriptive patch on the police uniform, unmarked cars.

Public Comment – Kevin Haigh, Augustine Street, commented on council authority. Mayor Walker assured him that four people were involved with the development of the list. Commissioner MacDonald believed that was wrong because she was not notified as a sitting commissioner and would have things to add as well. There was discussion back and forth as to the content and context of the people who met. Solicitor Griffiths confirmed that the meeting was in compliance with FOIA and that everyone was aware of the rules going forward. He also stated that if meetings were to be missed to notify the town manager ahead of time to ensure a quorum since the commission is down a seat. Mayor Walker commented on not missing meetings and knowing topics of executive session are confidential. Donna Valiante, Walnut Street, commented she felt some degree of bullying because the items on the list were compiled prior to anyone getting voted in. Commissioner Gretz wanted clarification on what Mrs. Valiante felt concerned about. She wanted to know if everyone had a specific list of items. Commissioner Gretz confirmed that yes, everyone wants changes in the town and that prior to that list, concerns would be brought up and either be brushed off or given unacceptable answers. Solicitor Griffiths confirmed that now the people have been sworn in, the sharing of ideas will occur at the meetings and from the sharing of ideas, resolutions and ordinances will be passed and there will be ample opportunity to discuss those items. He further advised that as chair of the meeting, the mayor can choose to hear comments at any time during the meeting in context to the discussion. Terri Parton, Justis Street, had a question about the Oxford house, their visitation rules, occupancy, and if the town had any oversight. (The town does not.) Jeff Biscoe, Justis Street, commented about kids on three-wheelers. Mayor Walker replied to use common sense and remember that they are kids and we cannot tell parents how to raise them. Kathy Joseph, Justis Street, commented on a girl on a three-wheeler and there was discussion. She also noted tractor trailers coming down Walnut. There was discussion about that and tractor trailers getting stuck and having to have Mayor Walker and Robert Harvey get them turned around. She congratulated council. She was concerned about Amazon and tractor trailers and remembered when GM was there and it was quitting time, the town would get flooded with traffic down Walnut Street to get to 95. Terri Parton, Justis Street, crosswalk at Exxon is set out and there are two cars sitting there and one is at the edge of the road and wanted to know if it could be repainted. Mayor Walker advised DelDOT has jurisdiction. Bob Harvey added that DelDOT is looking at that. Donna Valiante noted that any sizeable truck traveling down the street, her house bounces around and when resurfacing was done, there was damage. Victoria Wollaston, Christian Street, inquiry about the cage and wanted a status update. The appraiser did not express interest in looking at the cage. Mayor Walker advised that Ms. Wollaston contacted the University of Delaware about having homes added to the National Historical Registry and her currently-owned property at 100 E. Market Street is on that list. The cage came from the that building, First National Bank and was given to the town for use in the Old Town Hall where the court clerk would sit. Now that structure has been taken down because of renovations. He noted former council voted to potentially receive bids and treat the cage as surplus property but personally felt that anything historic should be kept with the building it came from. Vice Mayor Gretz commented that she agreed with that. Mayor Walker was set to put it to vote with the three commissioners that were in attendance. Solicitor Griffiths noted that the charter had provisions for surplus property. Mayor Walker said he did not want it to end up in Pennsylvania somewhere. Solicitor Griffiths said he wanted to review it some more and prepare a resolution.

Mayor Walker called for a motion to adjourn. Motion made by Vice Mayor Gretz and seconded by Commissioner Stagliano.

Meeting adjourned at 8:20 pm.

